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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 000785

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)

SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC VOTERS REJECT MONSENGWO'S CALL FOR NEW "DIALOGUE"

REF: A. KINSHASA 706

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 721

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) During a May 4-10 visit to several towns in eastern DRC, PolOff discovered strong disagreement to the appeal by Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo to launch a new national political dialogue in order to achieve a "consensus" on the DRC's political calendar (ref A) -- if, in fact, such a dialogue would necessitate further delays in the electoral calendar. In North Kivu province and Ituri District, members of political parties, civil society, the business community and the Catholic Church were nearly unanimous in agreeing that opening a new dialogue now would invariably delay the July 30 elections, since the parties involved would likely attempt to renegotiate the terms of the transition. While the groups PolOff encountered supported the idea of continued national reconciliation and consultations, none wanted such a process to take place at the expense of elections. (Note: Monsengwo did not explicitly call for a delay in elections, but his call for a national "dialogue" has been widely perceived as an initiative that would inevitably further push back elections. End note.)

[1](#)2. (C) The reaction expressed by most groups in eastern DRC was largely one of incredulity. Officials with the Catholic Church in Butembo and Bunia (where the Church's opinion carries significant weight among the population) questioned Monsengwo's authority to insert himself into the country's political process in such a manner. The Bishop of Bunia, Monsignor Dieudonne Ulingi, in particular expressed worry that the Archbishop's pronouncement would negatively influence the Church's attempts (at least in Bunia) to remain as neutral a force as possible during the pre-election period. The assistant Bishop of Mahagi, Monsignor Leonard, said he believed Monsengwo was "too far removed" from political reality in the DRC, and that the Archbishop did not understand the manner in which the Electoral Commission had prepared the new electoral calendar. Both Monsignor Leonard, and his counterpart in Butembo, Monsignor Emmanuel, said Monsengwo's views should not be seen as a true reflection of the Church's official position.

[1](#)3. (C) Outside the Church hierarchy, there was also criticism of Monsengwo's remarks. Elie Danga of Beni's civil society and Beni's Mayor Julien Paluku said in separate conversations that Monsengwo's announcement was nothing more than an attempt to play the role of kingmaker during any potential future national political conference. In Aru, the local Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) coordinator claimed Monsengwo was pursuing a "hidden agenda" by attempting to derail the political process and delay elections.

[1](#)4. (C) Philippe Mandefu, the Beni president of the regional political party RCD-K/ML, said the Archbishop had no authority to criticize the CEI's work. Other RCD-K/ML officials PolOff met with -- including one candidate for the National Assembly -- expressed the clear desire of nearly every potential voter encountered in eastern DRC -- there should be no further delays in holding elections.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: The reaction in eastern DRC to Monsengwo's call for a new political "dialogue" is notable because it underscores the strong desire of the vast majority of Congolese to hold elections as soon as possible while rejecting any political machinations to delay the vote any further. Monsengwo's appeal may have garnered support in certain quarters of Kinshasa and Kisangani, as evidenced by the call from 11 of the DRC's 33 presidential candidates for the resignation of the CEI's president (ref B). However, the majority of citizens PolOff spoke with in the east (an area that saw massive voter turnout in the country's December constitutional referendum) remain in favor of getting to election day with no further delays. End comment.

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